

Why Warm-Up, Cool-Down and Stretch?

You can help prevent injury and reduce muscle soreness if you warm-up before and cool-down after physical activity. Warming-up prepares your muscles and heart for activity. Cooling-down slows your heart rate gradually and helps prepare your muscles for the next time you're active.



Warm-up: Warm-ups take 5 to 15 minutes.

1. Do your planned activity, such as walking, but at a lower intensity (slower pace) for a brief time. This may mean walking slowly for a few minutes before speeding up.
2. Do a few minutes of mild stretching if you plan to do something more vigorous than walking.

Cool-down: Cool-downs take 5 to 15 minutes.

1. To cool-down, continue your activity but slow down the pace for a brief time.
2. Do a few minutes of mild stretching for all activities including walking.



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Stretching is important for a good warm-up and cool-down and is one of the best ways to prevent and avoid muscle soreness, cramps and injury.

Here are some helpful tips on how to stretch properly:

- Do a short warm-up before stretching such as walking.
- Stretch in both directions (i.e., if you stretch to the left don't forget to stretch to the right).
- Avoid fast, jerky movements. Stretch slowly and smoothly.
- Stretch to a point where you place a mild- but not painful- stretch on the muscles. When you repeat the stretch, you should be able to stretch a little further without pain.
- Hold each stretch for 10-30 seconds. **Do Not Bounce.**
- Repeat each stretch 3-5 times.
- Breathe slowly in and out. Do not hold your breath.
- Relax, enjoy, and feel good about yourself.
- Stretch often, if possible every day.

Important: Never stretch if you have severe pain. If a stretch causes much pain, stop doing it, or do it more gently. Listen to your body! Sample stretches are available from your *MOVE!* healthcare team.

